

## Interview Request Email

Dear Dr. [LAST NAME OF PI],

I'm writing on behalf of the National Science Foundation (NSF) to schedule a phone call with you. During that phone call, I would like to interview you about your participation in research grant activities funded through an NSF [Center Research Program] award.

This will help NSF to understand, from the perspective of its grantees, the role of the Center in research, collaboration, and broader impacts; grantee satisfaction with the Center structure and with one or two-phase funding models; and challenges encountered. Your feedback will inform NSF on issues relevant to the design, implementation, and evaluation of center-based research programs.

The call should take 30 minutes.

To schedule the phone call, please respond to this email with your availability on any of the following date and times:

[To be updated by NSF Representative or Contractor sending: available dates and times]

I look forward to connecting with you soon and learning more about your work.

Sincerely,

[To be updated by NSF Representative or Contractor sending with Name, Title, Organization]

## Interview Consent and OMB Notification

*Thank you so much for making time today to talk with me about NSF-funded Center-based research programs. We are interviewing a sample of Principal Investigators from across NSF's center-based research community. Your feedback will inform NSF on issues relevant to the design, implementation, and evaluation of center-based research programs.*

*Your answers will be aggregated with those of other respondents and the information you provide will not be attributed to you personally. Your participation is voluntary. Please feel free to skip any question you do not want to answer.*

*We would like to audio-record this interview to make sure we accurately capture everything you say. These recordings will not be shared outside of our team and will be destroyed in the end of the study.*

*Do you agree to be audio-recorded? Do you have any questions before we start?*

*The OMB control number for this project is 3145-0215. Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 30 minutes per respondent, including the time for consenting. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspects of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Suzanne H. Plimpton, Reports Clearance Officer, National Science Foundation, 2415 Eisenhower Ave, Alexandria, VA 22314 or send e-mail to [splimpto@nsf.gov](mailto:splimpto@nsf.gov).*

## Interview Protocol (30 minutes)

1. What motivated you to lead this research Center?
2. What is the history of your partnership? Whose initiative was it? How well did you know the other participants?
3. How involved is your group in the center activities? Has the nature and level of involvement changed over time?
4. In what way, if at all, has being part of the Center changed your scientific or engineering interests, visibility, productivity? Are there any disadvantages to you from leading/participating in the center?
5. In your opinion, are there certain types of problems that are better suited to Center funding or that require Center funding? If so, what are the characteristics that define such problems?
6. What do you see as the most important scientific or engineering accomplishments of the Center? Would they have been possible without it? If not, how were these accomplishments enabled by the Center?
7. What do you see as the most important non-scientific accomplishments of the Center (e.g. in workforce development, knowledge transfer, economic benefits, educating the general public)? Would they have been possible without the center? If not, how were these accomplishments enabled by the Center?
8. In what ways has your Center demonstrated leadership in your field and responsiveness to developments in the field?
9. Did you have a history of collaborating with the various partners prior to the Center? In retrospect, is it helpful to your Center to have had pre-existing collaborations with these partners? If yes, in what way? How have the partnerships evolved?
10. What aspects of the Center evolved in unexpected ways and/or deviated from the original goals? Did these changes lead to positive outcomes for your Center?
11. Do you expect the programs, partnerships, and processes created by the Center to remain in place after the funding ends? Can you give some examples of the lasting impacts you anticipate?
12. Is the Center well known to your community? In what way, if at all, has your community benefited from the Center?
13. In retrospect, what processes, policies, partnerships, and other organizational components of your Center do you see as the most and least effective?
14. What have been the main challenges for you/your group? For the Center as a whole? What would you do differently if you could start again?
15. What do you see as the main advantages of the Center model? What has the Center enabled you to do that could not be done under a single investigator award?
16. What are the disadvantages of the Center model?

17. Some Center-based research programs have a two-phase funding model. Phase 1 provides resources to develop the science, management, and broader impacts of a major center before requesting Phase II funding. What are the strengths and weaknesses of a 2-phase funding model? In hindsight, do you think a 1-phase or 2-phase mechanism would be more effective for this program? Why or why not?